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We Never Know How High

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Abstract

"ANYBODY want another?" . . . "Yes, I'll have one." . . . "Me, too." Chuck Sherwood collected the glasses and went into the kitchen....

POET

Today I found a pelican dead in the seawashed sand
With rivulets of foam and amber water streaming
From soggy tail and wingtips.
Its weird long neck twisted bent along its breast
The fold of skin of its huge beak all wetly gray.
And it was awkward even in death—graceless and ugly.
A dead gull is a wet black shadow on the sand
But the pelican is ludicrous—pathetic and ludicrous.
Death gives no beauty to the ugly,
No fame to the despised.
And the meek shall not inherit the earth—
The earth belongs to the living,
And the meek are dead even as they breathe.
The vibrant live in the vibrancy of the earth
And I would rather my wings be broken in flight
Than I had never soared.

—Margaret Leveson, *H. Ec. Sr.*



WE NEVER KNOW HOW HIGH . . .

“ANYBODY want another?” . . . “Yes, I’ll have one.”
. . . “Me, too.”

Chuck Sherwood collected the glasses and went into the kitchen.

“—and then Professor Tripp, head of the English department, you know, said to me, he said—”

“Oh, I think Pollack really has something. Such imagination.”

“Really?—I dislike him intensely, but I think Grandma Moses is simply charming.”

Chuck stopped short in the doorway to the kitchen, the liquid in the tall glasses on the tray he was holding slopping over the rims. My God, I promised H. G. I’d give him a memorandum in the morning—that report from the Schlink and Company people. A frown creased his forehead as he went into the living room.

"Thanks, Chuck." —I'll have to do it tonight—

"Thank you, Chuck." —Yes, but when?—

"Ah—This is fine, Chuck." —Well, these people will leave soon.—

Ha—when they leave I'll be so damned tired I won't be able to think. He looked over at Helen, his wife, but couldn't catch her eye. She was laughing at something Dave Rutter was telling her. Clara Rutter was engaged in a game of gin rummy with Art Kress.

"Chuck, don't you think Pollack is too charming?" —Maria Kress—fascinated by art and artists—knows absolutely nothing about them.

"I don't know anything about him, Maria."

"You don't? Oh, he's all the rage, you know."

"But, Maria, after all—Pieces of glass and cigar ashes—." Roscoe Lotti—I hope the chair breaks under him—a two hundred and fifteen pound pile of flabby flesh just kind of heaped in that chair.—Roscoe set his glass on the coffee table and daintily flicked the ash from his cigarette into the too-full ash tray.

Our friends. Chuck looked into his glass. They won't leave for hours—I'll get up early and do it.

"—and such an air of democracy over the whole thing and after what Professor Tripp had said to me. Well, I registered my—"

No, I won't either—I never have—God, but its smoky in here—. Chuck got up and opened the hall door. Why don't they leave? Why must they always drop in here on Sunday evenings? He sat down and picked up his glass. He put his lips to it. He almost gagged. I don't like to drink, anyway.

"Well, anyway, if Picasso could see Pollack's work he'd turn over in his grave." —Bob Linder looks like he's all nose from the shoulders up—and that giggle—.

"My dear Robert, Picasso is not dead yet. He's making pottery in Southern France." —How gently Roscoe speaks to Bob—that we should call a pair like that our friends—

"I'll go down with two."

"Oh my—that gives you a hundred and eleven points. A hundred and fifty's game, isn't it?"

—If I only had more time—but then recreation is absolutely

necessary—Recreation—Ha—Re-Creation—If this is Re-Creation—

“And then they put through the whole plan just as if everyone had voted for it from choice. Well, I registered my disapproval, anyway.”

—The tinkle of glasses is such a silly, empty sound—if I can stay sober I might be able to get it done tonight—. Chuck set his glass on the floor beside the chair and lit a cigarette.

“Such color and fire in Pollack.”

—Why can't I say no when they call?—If I only had time—I could do so many things—

“But why doesn't someone get up a petition against the way the voting was done?”

—Why don't I get up and tell them to leave?—After college I was going to write—and try a little painting—my own philosophy—if I only had time—get ahead at the office, if nothing else—Why don't they leave?

“Still, craftsmanship in drawing is absolutely necessary to art.”

Our friends—Rutter, a frightened, plodding professor of Modern Language—and Clara Rutter, a bird—and Kress, a weak seeker after success—and Maria—My God—and then those other two—God save us—Even Helen doesn't help any—Why don't they leave?

“But still the Old Masters are the best.”

—Why don't I leave?—

“A petition wouldn't help—”

—Yes, why don't I?—

“—they would have it their own way anyhow. Still, I object to the aura of democracy around the whole thing.”

Chuck stood up.

“Gin!”

He walked toward the stairs and started up them.

“Well, that's that. Another game?”

—So long all you lovely people—Good old Schlink and Company. He was almost out of sight when a hush came the room.

“What's the matter with him, Helen?”

“Oh, I don't know. He's been in kind of a bad mood all day.”

Wayne Wymore, Sci. Sr.